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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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~ Internet Censorship Up ~ People Are Talking! ~ Litchi, Beta 1 Out!

~ New Version of Suji! ~ Click Fraud Debate On! ~ eBay Is Condemned!
~ Estonia Gets Hacked! ~ Click On My Malware! ~ MS Patent Breaches!
~ Unlimited Yahoo Mail! ~ More Atari Bookmarks! ~

-* Web Site Baffles Trial Judge *-
-* DOJ Crackdown Nets 50th Conviction! -
-* AGs Seek Sex Offender Data From MySpace! *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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Another week, another dollar. Wow, the week started off with some terrific Spring weather and now it feels like March! Sun and warmth turned to cold and rain. It's mid-May - we shouldn't have to turn the heat on! I'm hoping for some increased temperatures soon!

I know that I touched on this last week, and Joe makes mention a little bit this week also. What is it with our fascination with the absurd in the news? How did it happen that the media turned from reporting the news to creating it? I see and read more headlines about stupidity over the real issues of today's world! The latest bit of tripe I've seen and read about relates to a young guy in Australia who created a simplistic online video game. What makes this garbage? The game "spoofs" the recent tragedy at Virginia Tech. Imagine the goal for this game is to shoot as many students as possible (or something just as absurd). What could be going through this guy's mind to create such a thing? Oh sure, in the television interview that I half-listened to, the guy says he can relate to the VT murderer because he also was bullied while growing up. So you glorify what happened with a video game? It's a sick world, folks. And then he offers to take the game offline if he's paid some money. While I see this type of a story as relevant to some sort of a documentary compilation, it's not the type of news that warrants national coverage in the media. By covering the story, the media is providing unwarranted attention and a time of "glory" for the nuts of the world.

There are more important things for the media to report. Real journalism, reporting on real news stories. I guess real news doesn't sell any more! We all want more to read about poor little rich girl Paris Hilton, public tongue-lashings between Rosie and the Donald, and every other bit of Hollywood-like stupidity! Yep, feeding the hungry in this country just isn't important. The genocide in Africa is just a little mundane for our tastes. I wonder what Paris Hilton's prison menu is going to be. Betcha we read about it in an upcoming newspaper!

Until next time...

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New Version of SuJi

Due to its flexibility, SuJi has long been the favourite file finder on the Atari range of computers running TOS, MagiC or MiNT. It will search for files matching an entered name or partial name (very extensive wild-cards can be used for search-masks); alternatively the contents of a directory, partition or whole disk can be listed. The results are displayed in a list which can be sorted in ascending or descending order on any of the columns (name, size, date, time, program flags, path of origin). If your desktop supports AV-Server, double-clicking an entry in the list will either launch the application if it is an executable file, or display the contents on the screen.

Now the original author, Daniel Höpfl, has released the sources, and Gerhard Stoll has used these to produce an improved version 1.36 that has three useful new features: Using Alt-O when the list is open brings up a dialog in which you can decide which columns are to be displayed (not many people will need to see the file time-stamp or the program flags, say), so making more room for long path-names to stay visible without scrolling the list window. In the same dialog you can also select which columns of selected entries (or the whole list) are to be written to the clipboard when you use Control-C; you can then paste this to a text editor for further processing. The third improvement is that both these options as well as the size and position of the list window are saved when the program is quit, so will come up the same way the next time you use SuJi.

SuJi remains freeware, is available in German, English or French, and may be downloaded from Gerhard’s web page: http://home.ewr-online.de/~gstoll/

This has been a public service announcement from Peter West (who produced and updated the English ST-Guide hypertext for it).

Regards, /Peter/
(Peter A. West, London W5 1PA)

Atari Bookmarks

The ATARI bookmarks page <http://eureka.atari.org/atari.html> was updated. The goal consists in valid links, even if it corresponds to sometime dated information. Part of those bookmarks persist since the creation of the WEB page, 10 years ago.

The interest with these numerous bookmarks, there’s 552, is to constitute an ATARI uptodate and dedicated search engine of the online scene. It is a service provided by Google Co-op. The base of this engine is a collection composed from time to time. It has become quite consistent now.

This is a first experience in the direction of WEB 2.0, because even if I’m responsible of its creation, *ATARI Search Engine* can possibly be extended by everybody connecting at

<http://www.google.com/coop/cse?cx=014753128619202207476%3Atzogojpdahi>

Have a good ATARI WEB Surfing :-)

--
François LE COAT
Author of Eureka 2.12 (2D Graph Describer, 3D Modeller)
http://eureka.atari.org/

Litchi, Beta 1

Bonsoir :)

Litchi is a next generation FTP client. Download on my website (after the Troll) or directly in the folder http://rajah.atari.org/files/
-> litchib1_uk.zip (90KB)

Snapshot: http://rajah.atari.org/images/snapshots/litchi_snap.png

Still in development, but it’s already usable (its archives were uploaded with it). At the moment, the program is adapted to MagiC (and MiNT ?). Working for old TOS is planned (8+3 names and intergrated local files browser). Recusivity (folders and their contents) is also planned.

Hope you’ll enjoy. Please read the ST-Guide doc for more informations.

Voilà !

-- Pierre TON-THAT - Rajah Lone / Renaissance
http://rajah.atari.org

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, we had some really nice days this week here in the Northeast. Unfortunately, it’s turned cold and rainy now, though. I guess that’s par for the course (notice the slight tip-of-the-hat to Dana with the golf metaphor?[g]) for this time of the year, but that doesn’t mean that I have to like it.

I’m going to tell you right off the bat that there’re very few messages in the NewsGroup this week... like... twenty-seven messages total. That’s just not enough to put together a good column, so I’m going to save this week’s messages and add them to next week’s. Okay? Good. I knew you’d agree.

In the meantime, let’s talk about world events... or, at least, what the media is telling us are world events.

Does anyone really care what happens to Paris Hilton? I’m sorry, folks, but to me, Paris Hilton spending a couple of weeks in jail just doesn’t

compare with what’s going on in Darfur or Iraq... or at the World Bank, or in the halls of Congress or the Supreme Court, or at any number of other places.

As far as I’m concerned, Brittany, Paris, Lindsay and whoever else can do whatever the hell strikes them as fun. I don’t care if they give an impromptu Velcro display. While there have always people who’ve been famous for being famous or for doing something strange, self-destructive or just plain stupid, I think it’s about time we take a good long look at what takes up our attention.

As I sit here writing this, there’s a heated debate raging on television about hotels offering "women-only" accommodations... whole floors of hotel rooms and lounges with men not allowed.

One side says, "Oh, women need this to feel safe." The other side is yelling "Discrimination against men!"

Give me a break, folks. I’m sure that some women would jump at a chance to have some upgraded amenities aimed at women only and a chance to not have to worry about being ’hit on’ in the hotel lounge or being mugged (or worse) on their way back to their room for an added cost, and I’m equally sure that there are women who would forego the changes.

The one thing that everyone seems to be forgetting is... wait for it... CHOICE.

That’s right, folks. Through it all, there is choice. No one is saying that women would be required to make use of a service like this, only that they could.

Did anyone raise a fuss when the ’Lifetime’ or ’Oxygen’ networks debuted? How ’bout SpikeTV, to put the shoe on the other foot? If we didn’t like these channels, we knew, all we had to do was not watch them. Problem solved, right?

So why is it that with hotel rooms, people are getting up-in-arms? I’m tempted to say that men travelers aren’t as concerned with being treated special as with being treated well, but that’d get me into trouble as fast as anything else. I guess that’s because, by omission, I’d be saying that women ARE more concerned with being treated special than with being treated well, and that’s not what I’m getting at.

My point is not that women should be treated special, or that they shouldn’t. My point is that we should let the market "shake out" and decide what people want. Anything else is just hot air. If women want women-only hotel floors and lounges, that’s fine with me. If they don’t, hotels will stop offering them eventually.

By now, there’s probably someone reading this saying, "Yeah, but what about us guys?"

C’mon, fella. Even in the worst case, where a hotel would have an inadequate lounge for men (and who can imagine hotels being so foolish?), all a guy would have to do is walk out of the hotel and around the corner to the inevitable sports bar less than half a block away. And I really can’t see MEN feeling more safe by being on a men-only floor, can you?

Over and above the idea that men aren’t generally afraid of women (at

least not in the aggressive/physical sense), men just don’t really care much about that old "men-only club" mentality anymore. By and large, we just don’t find ourselves that interesting, I guess.

And there is the difference. Some women would LIKE these services. I don’t know, maybe even most women. Not being a woman, it’s hard for me to even guess. But I’m sure that we can all imagine women who would feel more at ease with women-only floors and/or lounges.

I guess that, by my mentioning it here, I’m adding fuel to the fire, but let’s face it; how many of you are going to finish reading this and join the crusade either for or against anything... well, you might go on a crusade against small-time authors wasting time and space, but that’s about it. [grin]

Let’s hope that there’s an upsurge in activity in the NewsGroup next week.

Until then, keep your eye on the horizon, your nose to the grindstone, your ear to the ground and your back to the wheel, and always, always be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week’s Gaming Section - Halo 3 Gets Mixed Reviews!
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Tomb Raider for the Wii!
Condemned 2 in 2008!
And much more!

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->A-ONE’s Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Microsoft Lifts Shroud Off Halo 3 to Mixed Reviews

Microsoft Corp. gave a sneak peek at its "Halo 3" game on Friday, saying the next chapter of the fast-paced shooter trilogy will help it fend off competition from Sony Corp. and Nintendo Co. Ltd.

Gamers at the invitation-only preview gave mixed reviews.

"The graphics can use some work ... They’re not much different than the previous Halo," said Nicholas Puleo, editor of gaming news Web site Evilavatar.com.

"They’ve got five, six months until release, so they’ll add some

polish ... When I compare it to other things in the platform, it’s not standout."

Microsoft staged previews in New York and San Francisco on Friday in advance of the public test, or "beta," of the game, which goes live next Wednesday.

A public beta is unusual for a console game, and the one for the flagship title for Microsoft’s Xbox 360 is being closely watched by gamers eager to know how it looks and plays, and whether it will live up to the considerable buzz.

"I definitely believe that ’Halo 3’ is going to be bigger than ’Halo 2’. Retailers know what ’Halo 2’ did and they are not going to want to be caught out of stock," Shane Kim, head of Microsoft Game Studios, told Reuters.

The first "Halo" helped the original Xbox gain a foothold in the highly competitive video-game market, while the second installment became the top-selling game ever for the system, with sales of $125 million - roughly 2.5 million copies - in its first 24 hours of availability.

Microsoft plans to launch "Halo 3" in the autumn, Kim said. The first two games were released in November of 2001 and 2004 ahead of the year-end holiday season.

"I believe this is going to be one of the three biggest consumer entertainment events of the year, along with ’Spider-Man 3’ and the new ’Harry Potter’ book," Kim said.

"This is going to be a huge competitive advantage for us. Sony has nothing like it."

The game once again puts players in control of "Master Chief," a futuristic soldier trying to save humanity from an alien coalition known as the Covenant.

To make things more realistic, game maker Bungie Studios made the movements in "Halo 3" more closely follow the laws of real-world physics.

Dead bodies float. Grenades tossed in snow stay in place, while those thrown on harder surfaces skip and roll. Bullets ricochet off walls. And gamers’ characters straying too close to grenades will be maimed by their shrapnel effect.

The games have also driven adoption of the Xbox Live online gaming service, which offers some basic features for free but charges users about $50 a year for being able to play against other gamers.

In addition to being one of the year’s hottest-selling games, the publicity surrounding "Halo 3" should also spur some consumers to run out and buy an Xbox 360, said Craig Davison, Microsoft’s director of marketing.

"There’s a significant number of people just waiting for that one game," he said, "and this is the game."

Tomb Raider Coming to Nintendo Wii

One of the most popular game franchises in history will emerge in a new version this summer - but only one of the three major new gaming platforms will be invited to the party.

On Friday, SCi Entertainment, the owner of the Lara Croft Tomb Raider series, announced that PlayStation 2 and Windows PC versions of "Tomb Raider: Anniversary" will be released in Europe on June 1. A version for the handheld Sony PSP will be released shortly thereafter.

According to reports in the London TimesOnline, SCi is working on a version of the game for the Nintendo Wii platform that will be released later this year. The owners of the other two major gaming platforms, the PlayStation 3 and the Xbox 360, will have to wait until the 2008 release of "Tomb Raider 9" for their next Croft fix.

"Tomb Raider: Anniversary," the developers say, is a recreation of the original Lara Croft adventure released in 1996. The latest chapter in the busty heroine’s adventures is being created by the San Francisco-based Crystal Dynamics, a U.S. video game developer. Crystal Dynamics was acquired by Eidos Interactive, which originally developed and released the first Lara Croft game. Eidos itself was subsequently acquired by SCi Entertainment in 2005.

"Our goal was to capture the essence of what made the original Tomb Raider game such an incredible adventure," said Sean Vesce, the Studio Manager at Crystal Dynamics, "and use this to create a brand new Tomb Raider game."

Vesce said that Crystal Dynamics has rebuilt the original game from the ground up using tools and technologies that the company developed during its production of last year’s release, "Tomb Raider: Legend."

Kathryn Clements, the senior brand manager for Tomb Raider, said that "Tomb Raider: Anniversary is our way of paying tribute to Lara and the history of the franchise that will not only appeal to her fans, but also encourage a whole new generation of Lara lovers."

The decision by SCi to develop a version of Tomb Raider: Anniversary for the Wii is driven by the platform’s unique game controls, Clements said. "The Wii Remote and nunchuck controllers allow Wii gamers to control Lara in brand new, unique ways, and there are plenty of new features, to be revealed soon, which will ensure Anniversary really hits the spot."

SCi’s announcement of a Wii-specific version of Tomb Raider: Anniversary adds to what has been a very good year for Nintendo. According to trade press figures, the company sold nearly six million Wiis in the first five months of the product’s release, and Nintendo anticipates selling another 14 million units by March 2008.

The Wii reportedly is outselling the Sony PlayStation 3 by a 2:1 margin, accounting in part for Sony’s heavy 1Q 2007 losses.

Sega Plans 2008 Release of Condemned 2

In a move that undoubtedly will add fuel to the fire burning over violence in video games, Sega of America and Sega of Europe announced their plans

to release "Condemned 2: Bloodshot," the sequel to the earlier successful release of "Condemned: Criminal Origins."

The game will be developed by Monolith Productions, and will be distributed for the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 platforms. Sega expects the game to earn a rating of "M" for mature audiences only.

Scott A. Steinberg, the Vice President of Marketing for Sega of America, predicted that players would be enthralled. "Condemned 2: Bloodshot will keep gamers on the edge of their seats," Steinberg said. "Experience all the tension, psychological terror, and a variety of first-person, hand-to-hand fighting mechanics in this innovative atmospheric thriller gamers have been longing for."

According to the Sega press release, the premise for the new game is that a series of gruesome murders have occurred, and "players must use their deductive skills and brute force to track down sadistic serial killers." Players assume the identity of the game's central character, Ethan Thomas (a psychologically scarred former member of a mythical Serial Crimes Unit), and use a combination of forensic tools and brute force to solve the game's mysteries.

The original Condemned was noted for its occasionally gruesome hand-to-hand combat. Sega promises that Condemned 2 will be every bit as visceral, but also will feature a completely new fighting system, "with defensive and offensive combo chains, as well as grapples and holds."

According to TeamXbox reviewer Brent Soboleski, who was shown a trailer for the game at a Sega press event, "The gameplay will once again focus heavily on violent melee combat as Ethan uses everything from his own two fists, to pipes and whatever else he might find in the environment to once again beat his way through an onslaught of less than savory characters."

As gaming platforms become increasingly interactive, it should come as no surprise that games are starting to take advantage of the new capabilities. Sega said that Condemned 2 will have several online multiplayer modes, "including deathmatch, that promise to deliver the most brutal hand-to-hand combat experience the first person genre has ever seen."

The predicted M rating notwithstanding, the unrepentent violence of Condemned 2 is likely to spur efforts by federal legislators to regulate violence in video games. Among others, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY), one of the leading contenders for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination, has proposed dramatic fines for retail managers who sell minors video games labeled with an "M," "Adults-Only," or "Rating Pending."

When she introduced the Family Entertainment Protection Act (FEPA) in the winter of 2005, Senator Clinton said that there are many "wonderful games" that help children learn or develop hand-to-eye coordination. "However," she added, "there are also games that are just not appropriate for our nation's youth. This bill will help empower parents by making sure their kids can't walk into a store and buy a video game that has graphic, violent, and pornographic content."

FEPA promptly vanished into committee and never emerged, but three different bills have been introduced this year alone: two to prevent deceptive ratings of games and one to fund research into the effects of violent video games. Condemned 2 is not likely to quiet congressional

concern about this issue, and 2008 is, after all, an election year.

Video Games Giant Sees Battle in Europe

Electronic Arts, the video games giant that created the "Need for Speed" series is finding the race for entertainment will determine how the battle for gamers on consoles, computers and cell phones is won and lost.

Two key challenges in the industry are which gaming products Europeans single out as their top picks and what success firms have in improving technology. This will also influence how far cell phones go in driving revenues across the industry.

"I believe the biggest fight will be in Europe," Gerhard Florin, Electronic Arts' international publishing head Gerhard Florin told the Reuters technology, Media and Telecoms summit in Paris this week.

"Whoever wins the hardware war in Europe, most likely will be the overall winner," he said, referring to leading players such as Microsoft Corp., Sony Corp. and Nintendo Co., with their Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 and Wii respectively.

Major recent technological advances have radically improved the graphics on gaming consoles and personal computers, but technological hurdles still remain in cell phones.

Florin said the revenue prospects for cell phone gaming largely depends on what sort of new players get involved.

"If new consumers come in, they might not react to new hardware in the same way as the core gamers who go for bits and bytes and have to have the latest processor power," he said.

Florin thought technology had done so much to improve the quality of games on computers and consoles that the industry was now turning its attention elsewhere, namely the quality of story telling and bringing more emotion into gaming.

"Everybody gets carried away with the technology. When the technology gets more usable ... then the story tellers get more to the forefront," he said. "My hope is, but I can't tell you when it will be, that we reach the peak in perfection so that the consumer doesn't see the difference in technology anymore - then it is a pure race for entertainment."

This was one of the reasons why Electronic Arts and Dutch television production company Endemol recently developed a virtual world avatar creator called "Virtual Me" that lets consumers create digital versions of themselves. These can then be integrated into shows in Endemol's virtual world, including "Deal Or No Deal," and "Fame Academy."

UBS analysts said in a research note on Tuesday that U.S. and European games markets could grow 50 percent from $12 billion in 2006 to $18 billion in 2009 with peak profitability in the current console cycle occurring in 2008-2009.

The broker said new revenue opportunities should come from games consoles moving from the living room onto the Internet.

"The risk is that the rising costs of developing games and industry changes could leave some players behind," UBS said.

Telecoms executives at the Reuters TMT summit in Paris said they saw the value in cell phone gaming, but were yet to be convinced of the industry's ability to ramp up its revenues.

"We have had flirtations with games, but the revenue was always deeply niche," Peter Erskine, head of Telefonica's non-Spanish European operations, O2 Europe, said on Thursday.

Sony Ericsson President Miles Flint said mobile services that bundle a lot of Java-enabled games get a lot of usage but technical challenges remain - namely the quality of graphics and speeds within networks, which is key for multi-player gaming.

"You need to have the network latency issue fixed so you can create a compelling consumer experience - it is definitely there in our thinking," Flint said.

Companies like Sony Ericsson were continually dealing with issues such as phone power consumption, screen size, power use, functionality and the quality of services on them.

"There is a constant set of trade offs - we haven't yet seen that gaming is quite there in terms of performance," he said.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online - Online Users Growl & Purr!
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Internet Game of Virginia Massacre Sparks Outrage

An Australian man has sparked a storm of protest after creating an online computer game based on the murderous shooting spree at Virginia Tech in the United States last month.

Players control an image of Korean-born gunman Cho Seung-hui, who killed 32 people before turning a gun on himself, and screams can be heard on the soundtrack as shots are fired at the other characters.

The creator of "V-Tech Rampage", 21-year-old Ryan Lambourn, said he made the game "because it's funny," the Sydney Morning Herald reported Thursday.

The unemployed Lambourn responded to outraged calls for him to remove the game from the Internet by demanding 1,000 US dollars for each of the two sites it is on and said that for another 1,000 dollars he would apologise.

But he said later that was a joke to "make more people angry" and he would not remove the game from his own website or seek to have it removed from

amateur game sharing site Newgrounds.com.

The game, described as offering "three levels of stealth and murder" is set on a facsimile of the Virginia Tech campus and can be freely downloaded from either site.

"I've done offensive things before but they're not usually this popular," he said.

Lambourn said that while he had sympathy for those who had lost friends and relatives in the massacre, he also had sympathy for the gunman.

"No one listens to you unless you've got something sensational to do. And that's why I feel sympathy for Cho Seung-Hui. He had to go that far."

Lambourn told the national AAP news agency that he would not take down the game under any circumstances, even if he received a request from the victims' families.

"I'm afraid not," he said, but added: "I hope they'd never do that."

He said he empathised with the killer and that he, like Cho, had been a victim of abuse and bullying at high school.

Lambourn was born in Australia but grew up in the United States before returning to Australia when he was 14.

He said he left school in the eighth grade having been bullied and abused at several institutions in Texas, Maine, New Jersey, New York and North Carolina.

He described himself as a self-taught animator supported financially by his mother, who still lives in the United States.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

U.S. Piracy Crackdown Nets 50th Conviction

A U.S. Department of Justice crackdown on online piracy has recorded its 50th felony conviction, the agency announced.

Christopher E. Eaves, 31, of Iowa Park, Texas, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit copyright infringement for his involvement in the Apocalypse Crew, an online organization offering downloads before music was released to the public, the DOJ said. Eaves' plea, part of the DOJ's Operation FastLink, came Monday in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia.

Eaves is scheduled to be sentenced Aug. 10. He faces up to five years in

prison and a US$250,000 fine.

The 50th conviction "represents a milestone never before achieved in any online piracy prosecution," Alice Fisher, assistant attorney general in the DOJ's criminal division, said in a statement.

Operation FastLink is an ongoing DOJ crackdown against the organized piracy groups responsible for most of the initial illegal distribution of copyright movies, software, games and music on the Internet. Operation FastLink has resulted in more than 120 search warrants executed in 12 countries; the confiscation of hundreds of computers and illegal online distribution hubs; and the removal of more than $50 million dollars worth of software, games, movies and music from illegal distribution channels.

Eaves acknowledged that he was a leading member in the illegal software, game, movie and music trade online, commonly referred to as the "warez" scene, the DOJ said. Eaves was an active member of the Apocalypse Crew, a group that acted as a first provider of copyright music to the Internet by serving as the original source for many of the pirated works distributed and downloaded online, the DOJ said.

Apocalypse Crew sought to acquire digital copies of songs and albums before their commercial release in the U.S., the DOJ said. The supply of such pre-release music was often provided by music industry insiders, such as radio announcers, employees of music magazine publishers or workers at compact disc manufacturing plants.

AGs Seek Sex Offender Data From MySpace

Top law enforcement officers from seven states issued a letter to MySpace.com on Monday, asking the social networking site to turn over the names of registered sex offenders who use the service.

The letter asks MySpace to provide information on how many registered sex offenders are using the site, and where they live. Attorneys general from North Carolina, Connecticut, Idaho, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Ohio and Pennsylvania signed the letter.

Law enforcement agencies have identified more than 200 cases nationwide of children "lured out of their home by predators they met on MySpace," North Carolina Attorney General Roy Cooper said a written statement Monday.

In their letter, the attorneys general also asked that MySpace describe the steps it has taken to warn users about sex offenders and remove their profiles.

Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal called the site a "virtual playground" for predators.

"That combination of sex offenders and children is a recipe for tragedy," Blumenthal said.

Myspace's policy prevents children under 14 from setting up profiles, but it relies on users to specify their ages.

The site is owned by media conglomerate News Corp.

"Web Site" Baffles Internet Terrorism Trial Judge

A British judge admitted on Wednesday he was struggling to cope with basic terms like "Web site" in the trial of three men accused of inciting terrorism via the Internet.

Judge Peter Openshaw broke into the questioning of a witness about a Web forum used by alleged Islamist radicals.

"The trouble is I don't understand the language. I don't really understand what a Web site is," he told a London court during the trial of three men charged under anti-terrorism laws.

Prosecutor Mark Ellison briefly set aside his questioning to explain the terms "Web site" and "forum." An exchange followed in which the 59-year-old judge acknowledged: "I haven't quite grasped the concepts."

Violent Islamist material posted on the Internet, including beheadings of Western hostages, is central to the case.

Concluding Wednesday's session and looking ahead to testimony on Thursday by a computer expert, the judge told Ellison: "Will you ask him to keep it simple, we've got to start from basics."

Younes Tsouli, 23, Waseem Mughal, 24, and Tariq al-Daour, 21, deny a range of charges under Britain's Terrorism Act, including inciting another person to commit an act of terrorism "wholly or partly" outside Britain.

Tsouli and Mughal also deny conspiracy to murder. Al-Daour has pleaded not guilty to conspiring with others to defraud banks, credit card and charge card companies.

Prosecutors have told the jury at Woolwich Crown Court, east London, that the defendants kept car-bomb-making manuals and videos of how to wire suicide vests as part of a campaign to promote global jihad, or holy war.

The trial continues.

Estonia Sustains Hacker Attacks

A spree of denial-of-service (DOS) attacks against Web sites in Estonia appears to be subsiding, as the government calls for greater esponse mechanisms to cyber attacks within the European Union.

The attacks, which started around April 27, have crippled Web sites for Estonia's prime minister, banks, and less-trafficked sites run by mall schools, said Hillar Aarelaid, chief security officer for Estonia's Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT), on Thursday. But most of the affected Web sites have been able to restore service.

"Yes, it's serious problem, but we are up and running," Aarelaid said.

Aarelaid said analysts have found postings on Web sites indicating Russian

hackers may be involved in the attacks. However, analysis of the malicious traffic shows that computers from the U.S., Canada, Brazil, Vietnam and others have been used in the attacks, he said.

Experts from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are helping Estonia investigate the attacks, Aarelaid said.

Press reports also speculated that tension between the two countries may have resulted in a coordinated campaign by Russia against Estonia. Last month, Estonia irked Russia by moving a Soviet-era World War II memorial of a bronze soldier, sparking protests. Aarelaid dismissed the theory, saying Estonians were also divided on the issue.

A DOS attack involves commanding other computers to bombard a Web site with requests for data, causing the site to stop working. Hackers use botnets - or groups of computers they've infected with malicious software - to launch an attack.

It's difficult to trace who controls botnets, as the networks involve compromised computers located around the world.

"If you have an unknown number of attackers with different skills and capabilities, it's quite painful," Aarelaid said.

In Brussels on Monday, Estonia's defense minister, Jaak Aaviksoo, called for the development of a stronger capability to respond to cyber attacks within the European Union.

"Extensive cyber attacks against Estonia show clearly that this matter should be seriously dealt with and relevant information exchange with one another," Aaviksoo said.

Internet Censorship Grows Worldwide

Internet censorship is growing worldwide, with 26 out of 40 countries blocking or filtering political or social content, a study reported Friday.

The survey carried out by experts at four leading universities found that people in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa were often denied access to information about politics, sexuality, culture or religion.

Conducting the first of what is planned to become an annual survey, the experts at the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard and Toronto found that the approach varied according to the country.

For example, South Korea heavily censored only one topic, North Korea, while ran, China and Saudi Arabia blocked both a wide range of topics and a great deal of content related to those topics.

The experts with the OpenNet Initiative, who carried out their research last year, listed six countries as "pervasive" filterers of political information: Myanmar, China, Iran, Syria, Tunisia and Vietnam.

They categorized seven countries, all of them Muslim, as "pervasive" social filterers: Iran, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Topics blocked are those considered antithetical to social norms, such as pornography, gay and lesbian content, and gambling.

Social filtering also was carried out by countries like France and Germany, where websites that deny the Holocaust or promote Nazism are blocked.

The survey found that Myanmar, China, Iran, Pakistan and South Korea have the "most encompassing national security filtering," targeting the websites of insurgents, extremists, and terrorists.

"The survey shows us that online censorship is growing around the world," said John Palfrey, executive director of the Berkman Center for Internet and Society, and clinical professor of law at Harvard Law School.

"Some regulation is to be expected as the medium matures, but filtering and surveillance can seriously erode civil liberties and privacy and stifle global communications," he added in a statement.

However, the survey found that a handful of countries where Internet filtering might be expected - such as Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Malaysia, Nepal, Russia, Venezuela and Zimbabwe - were found not to filter.

The survey said that Internet filtering techniques have evolved with the growing complexity of content.

"Instead of just blocking static Web sites, such as pages online that show pornographic pictures or information about human rights, online censors are blocking entire applications, such as YouTube," it added.

Other applications that are often targeted are internet telephony service Skype and Google Maps. Still others are blogs, political parties and local non-government organisations.

"In the case of blogs, a number of countries, including Pakistan and Ethiopia, have blocked entire blogging domains," it said.

The survey said the United States and European countries did not come in for testing, as the filtering practices were better understood than in other parts of the world.

The survey marked "the first step towards a comprehensive global assessment of Internet filtering practices," said Oxford University professor Jonathan Zittrain,who expects to find more countries that filter the Internet as testing is expanded.

Click On My Malware :)

Didier Stevens wanted to find out how easy it would be to use the Google Adwords system for malicious purposes, to deliver malware. He could have tried to be subtle, but that would have been too easy.

So he bought the domain drive-by-download.info, created an Adwords campaign with several keywords that were variants of "drive by download," linking the ads to the Web site, and waited. The ad actually said "Is your

PC virus-free? Get it infected here! drive-by-download.info."

Over 6 months the ad was displayed 259,723 times and clicked on 409 times. This cost him $23 to Google, or 5.6 cents per click.

Of course his Web site didn't actually download anything to the user, but it could have, and he could have attracted many more clicks by being dishonest about his intentions.

Microsoft Details Patent Breaches

Microsoft Corp. has given the most detailed description to date of the number of open-source computer programs it says infringe on its patents, but the company says it still prefers licensing deals with open-source developers, software distributors and users instead of legal action against them.

"There is no reason why any segment of the industry needs to be exempt from intellectual property rules," Horacio Gutierrez, a Microsoft vice president for intellectual property and licensing, said in an interview Monday.

At the most basic level, open-source software is distributed free of charge to consumers or businesses to use on their computers, and to programmers to modify, build on, and distribute again - also for free. While proprietary software companies like Microsoft make money by selling licenses for programs, open-source companies give away the program and usually make money selling support services.

Open-source programs step on 235 Microsoft patents, the company said. Free Linux software violates 42 patents. Graphical user interfaces, the way menus and windows look on the screen, breach 65. E-mail programs step on 15, and other programs touch 68 other patents, the company said. The patent figures were first reported by Fortune magazine.

Microsoft also said Open Office, an open-source program supported in part by Sun Microsystems Inc., infringes on 45 patents. Sun declined to comment on the allegation.

Microsoft is the dominant maker of software that powers servers and desktop PCs, but the company views the free or low-cost Linux operating system alternatives "with a great deal of concern," said Al Gillen, an analyst at the technology research group IDC.

"It's one of the few operating systems that represents a viable threat that Microsoft has a great deal of difficulty containing," Gillen said, because the developers share their code.

"Microsoft can't drive a company out of business and make Linux go away," the analyst said.

Instead, Microsoft has struck a number of patent-licensing deals with companies that use open source code, most notably Novell Inc. last November. In one aspect of the deal, Microsoft agreed to sell Novell's flavor of Linux, called Suse. It also agreed not to sue the customers who bought it, even though it claims the open-source software infringes on its patents.

"Microsoft could have chosen to litigate many years ago, but we have decided not to do that," Gutierrez said. Instead, in the interest of making sure programs that include open-source technology work well with Microsoft products and vice versa, the company will continue to pursue similar deals.

Much of the open-source community was unhappy with the Novell deal, which it saw as a workaround to a widely used open-source license called the GNU General Public License.

More broadly, the free software movement saw the deal as an attack on one of its core tenets. Under the public license, once open-source code is incorporated into another company's technology, the new product must also be freely available - a distribution model that Microsoft clearly doesn't support.

"Now it becomes possible to divide and conquer our community," said Eben Moglen, an attorney for the Free Software Foundation, the entity behind the GNU license. By making a pact with Novell, Microsoft also implied that anyone who downloaded or bought Linux from another vendor was doing so illegally.

The next version of the GNU license, currently in draft form, aims to stop similar deals in the future. Moglen said the draft states that if a company like Microsoft distributes open-source programs protected by the GNU license, it forfeits any related patent claims.

Open-source proponents are frustrated by Microsoft's repeated allusions to patent violations because "they never say what patents being violated, never make any assertions, never put the evidence out there," said Larry Augustin, a technology startup investor who launched SourceForge.net, a prominent open-source development site, in 1999.

But Augustin also acknowledged that it's not in Microsoft's interest to do so: Open-source programmers could rewrite their code to avoid infringing on specific patents, or the courts could find that Microsoft's patent isn't valid.

If Microsoft were to start suing, it could also kick off a patent war on a grand scale. An organization called the Open Innovation Network, funded by IBM Corp., Red Hat Inc. and others, has amassed a vast number of software patents. In the event of a Microsoft lawsuit against open source companies or customers, the OIN would retaliate in kind.

"We believe it's highly likely that Microsoft would infringe some of our patents," said Jerry Rosenthal, OIN's chief executive.

eBay Condemned for Allowing "Rampant" Ivory Trade

The elephant, the world's largest land mammal, is being threatened with global extinction by a "rampant trade" in ivory on the eBay online auction site, animal welfare campaigners said on Tuesday.

International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) said it had conducted a survey in Britain, Australia, China, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Canada and the United States and tracked more than 2,200 elephant ivory

items listed on eBay websites.

It found more than 90 percent of the listings breached even eBay's own wildlife policies.

International wildlife trade laws differ from country to country and are often complex, but according to the IFAW in general it is illegal to sell carved or uncarved ivory unless it is antique and accompanied by a proof of age certificate.

The Fund says the only way to protect elephants from poachers is to shut down the markets where illegal ivory can easily be passed off as antique.

"As the world's largest online shop window, eBay has a special responsibility to lead the way by banning ivory from their sites, said Robbie Marsland, IFAW's British director.

"Only a global ban on all ivory sales will remove the cover under which this criminal activity currently operates and as a result, seriously help to decrease illegal trade and the cruel and unnecessary slaughter of elephants."

Gareth Streeter, a spokesman for eBay in London, said in a statement the Web site operated policies to "restrict the sale of ivory in accordance with existing UK and international law.

"We have had a number of positive and fruitful discussions with the IFAW about how we can work together to ensure that our policies are effectively enforced, and we are committed to working with them to tackle the problem of illegal ivory sales," he said.

Marsland urged eBay to ban all trade in ivory.

"Elephants are facing extinction, in part because of Internet ivory trade. It is time for action," he said.

New Study Renews Click Fraud Debate

Deceptive clicks on Internet advertising links distributed by Google Inc., Yahoo Inc. and other online marketing vehicles are probably occurring far more frequently than the network operators acknowledge, according to a study by fraud detection specialist Fair Isaac Corp.

The chicanery involves automated computer programs or scam artists who repeatedly click on ad links with no intention of buying anything. The short ad links, which appear alongside search results and other content at thousands of Web sites, typically trigger a commission with each click - a financial formula ripe for mischief, Minneapolis-based Fair Isaac found.

The study's preliminary conclusions, scheduled to be discussed Friday during a Fair Isaac conference in San Francisco, threaten to revive suspicions among advertisers that they have been overcharged as part of a ruse known as "click fraud."

After reviewing a handful of Web sites since last August, Fair Isaac believes 10 to 15 percent of the advertising traffic is "pathological," indicating a likelihood of click fraud, said Joseph Milana, the company's

chief scientist of research and development.

"It’s still an early result," Milana said. "The question remains about how broad the problem is in the entire marketplace."

The culprits behind click fraud typically are either trying to make more money from the ads appearing on their own Web sites or maliciously trying to drain the marketing budgets of a competitor.

Google, which runs the Internet’s largest ad network, maintains its engineers and filters identify all but 0.02 percent of the click fraud on its network. The Mountain View-based company says it doesn’t bill advertisers for any of the flagged click fraud.

Yahoo, which runs the second-largest ad network, also maintains its preventive measures weed out all but a small portion of click fraud.

Fair Isaac’s initial estimates fall in the same range as those made by Click Forensics, a San Antonio-based consulting service that compiles a quarterly index tracking click fraud rates.

Other studies have estimated click fraud rates as high as 30 percent, a figure implying advertisers have paid billions of dollars for bogus sales referrals during the past few years.

Google and Yahoo have consistently ridiculed double-digit click fraud estimates as the handiwork of search engine consultants trying to drum up more demand for their services by alarming advertisers.

On the flip side, Google and Yahoo have a powerful incentive to debunk the click fraud claims to preserve confidence in a system that generates most of their profits. Last year alone, Google and Yahoo sold a combined $16 billion in Internet ads.

Fair Isaac enters the debate with a track record for ferreting out fraudulent conduct in other industries.

Best known for a scoring system that rates the creditworthiness of consumers, Fair Isaac also has helped banks fight credit card fraud for 15 years. More recently, the company has sold anti-fraud tools to health care providers and telecommunications companies.

Now, Fair Isaac is trying to determine whether click fraud is a big enough problem to justify the company developing a potential solution that could help boost its own profits. "This is a problem that fits well in our sweet spot," Milana said.

Click fraud doesn’t appear to be a major problem when the ads appear on Google’s and Yahoo’s respective Web sites, Milana said.

The trouble starts cropping up once Google and Yahoo deliver the ads to other Web sites that are part of their vast marketing networks.

"They just don’t know what happens beyond their own firewalls," Milana said of Google and Yahoo.

Ads on other Web sites accounted for $4.16 billion, or 39 percent, of Google’s revenue last year. Google shared $3.31 billion of that revenue with its advertising partners. Yahoo doesn’t break out how much of its revenue comes from ads on other Web sites.

Unlimited Yahoo Mail Goes Live

Yahoo Mail has started offering unlimited email storage, fulfilling the promise it made in March.

The company said all Yahoo Mail user accounts would be upgraded over the coming months, making it the first of the world's three largest webmail providers to provide unlimited email storage.

Until about three years ago, most major webmail providers offered very limited storage, often in the 2MB to 10MB range. This forced users to regularly delete or download their email messages instead of keeping them on the webmail providers' servers. That all changed in April 2004 with Google's introduction of Gmail and its then-unprecedented 1GB inbox, which ignited the storage race.

But now Yahoo is claiming the bragging rights. "By beginning the roll out of unlimited email storage, we're continuing to build upon the industry's best webmail service," said George Hadjigeorgiou, General Manager Yahoo! Communication & Community Products Europe.

Pentagon Limits Troops' Web Access

Lt. Daniel Zimmerman, an infantry platoon leader in Iraq, puts a blog on the Internet every now and then "to basically keep my friends and family up to date" back home.

It just got tougher to do that for Zimmerman and a lot of other U.S. soldiers. No more using the military's computer system to socialize and trade videos on MySpace, YouTube and nine other Web sites, the Pentagon says.

Citing security concerns and technological limits, the Pentagon has cut off access to those sites for personnel using the Defense Department's computer network. The change limits use of the popular outlets for service members on the front lines, who regularly post videos and journals.

"I put my blog on there and my family reads it," said Zimmerman, 29, a platoon leader with B Company, 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment.

"It scares the crap out of them sometimes," he said.

"I keep it as vague as possible," he said. "I'm pretty responsible about it. It's just basically to tell a little bit about my life over here" he said.

He's regularly at a base where he doesn't have Defense Department access to the Internet, but he has used it when he goes to bigger bases. He'll have to rely on a private account all the time now.

Memos about the change went out in February, and it took effect last week. It does not affect the Internet cafes that soldiers in Iraq use

that are not connected to the Defense Department’s network. The cafe sites are run by a private vendor, FUBI (For US By Iraqis).

Also, the ban also does not affect other sites, such as Yahoo, and does not prevent soldiers from sending messages and photos to their families by e-mail.

Internet use has become a troublesome issue for the military as it struggles to balance security concerns with privacy rights. As blogs and video-sharing become more common, the military has voiced increasing concern about service members revealing details about military operations or other information about equipment or procedures that will aid the enemy.

At the same time, service members have used the Web sites to chronicle their time in battle, posting videos and writing journals that provide a powerful, personal glimpse into their days at war.

"These actions were taken to enhance and increase network security and protect the use of the bandwidth," said Col. Gary Keck, a Pentagon spokesman.

The Pentagon said that use of the video sites in particular was putting a strain on the network, and also opening it to potential viruses or penetration by so-called "phishing" attacks in which scam artists try to steal sensitive data by mimicking legitimate Web sites.

"The U.S. Army’s not going to pay the bill for you to get on MySpace and YouTube," said Maj. Bruce Mumford, of Chester, Neb., who is serving as the brigade communications officer for the 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, in Iraq. "Soldiers need to know what they can and cannot do, but we shouldn’t be facilitating it."

Warnings of the shutdown went out in February, and allowed troops to seek waivers if the sites were necessary for their jobs. Often insurgent groups post videos, including ones of attacks or - in some high profile cases - of U.S. or coalition soldiers who have been captured or killed.

"I guess it’s a good general policy," Zimmerman said about the ban on MySpace and YouTube." If people could be trusted not to break operational security, then they wouldn’t need to have the policy."

If the restrictions are intended to prevent soldiers from giving or receiving bad news, they could also prevent them from providing positive reports from the field, said Noah Shachtman, who runs a national security blog for Wired Magazine.

"This is as much an information war as it is bombs and bullets," he said. "And they are muzzling their best voices."

The sites covered by the ban are the video-sharing sites YouTube, Metacafe, IFilm, StupidVideos and FileCabi; social networking sites MySpace, BlackPlanet and Hi5; music sites Pandora, MTV, 1.fm and live365, and the photo-sharing site Photobucket.

Pentagon Defends Move To Block Web Sites

The Pentagon on Thursday defended a decision to block popular Web sites including YouTube and MySpace on U.S. military computers, saying it needed to keep its network clear for operations.

Military officials said they had restricted access to more than a dozen recreational sites because they had registered high levels of use on Department of Defense computers.

Rear Adm. Elizabeth Hight, deputy head of the Defense Information Systems Agency, said the Pentagon needed to ensure bandwidth on its network of more than 5 million computers was not clogged by the use of those sites.

"This network is critical for our effective and efficient and safe combat operations," Hight told reporters.

"We use it for everything from ordering supplies to sending orders to providing logistics information, scheduling people to get on an airplane, scheduling goods to move from point to point," she told reporters at the Pentagon.

Rep. Ed Markey, the chairman of the House of Representatives subcommittee on telecommunications and the Internet, has called on the Pentagon to reverse the decision, which took effect on Monday.

In a letter to Defense Secretary Robert Gates earlier this week, Markey said troops overseas had used many of the blocked sites to communicate with family and friends and that those contacts were critical for morale.

But the Pentagon said many of the sites had already been blocked on military computers in Iraq and Afghanistan for more than two years and troops had many other ways of keeping in touch with loved ones.

The Pentagon agency responsible for morale provided commercial Internet services free of charge at bases across Iraq and Afghanistan and those would be unaffected by the decision, Hight said.

She said the Pentagon had not banned troops from using the sites but had simply decided they could not be accessed from U.S. military computers to preserve bandwidth.

New technologies such as streaming video were real "bandwidth hogs," Hight said.

"We just simply cannot accommodate the growth in the bandwidth demands of this newer technology for both official reasons and recreational sites," she said.

The Pentagon said the blocked sites included YouTube, 1.fm, Pandora, MySpace, PhotoBucket, Live365, hi5, Metacafe, MTV, ifilm.com, Blackplanet, stupidvideos and filecabi.

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